

Appl. No. 09/700,712  
Amendment dated: March 22, 2006  
Reply to OA of: July 1, 2005

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-16(cancelled).

17(previously presented). A  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* deprived of its *thyA* gene functionality by selected nucleotide sequence deletion and/or insertion in the chromosome comprising at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA element having a functional *thyA* gene that enables the strain to grow in the absence of thymine in the growth medium, wherein the at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA elements further comprises a structural gene encoding a homologous or heterologous protein.

18(previously presented). A  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* wherein the strain has been deprived of its *thyA* gene functionality by site-directed mutagenesis in the *V. cholerae* chromosome by deletion and/or insertion of nucleotides at the locus of the *thyA* gene.

19(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA element is a plasmid.

20(currently amended). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA ~~have~~ element has a foreign *thyA* gene.

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21(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 20, wherein the foreign *thyA* gene is an *E. coli thyA* gene.

22(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the encoded heterologous protein is selected from heat labile enterotoxin B-subunit of *Escherichia coli* (LTB) and *Schistosoma japonicum* glutathione S-transferase 26 kD protein (GST 26 kD).

23(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain according to claim 17, wherein the *thyA* gene of the chromosome has the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1, before it has been deprived of its functionality as a *thyA* gene.

24(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 18, wherein the structural *thyA* gene of the chromosome has the nucleotide sequence of nucleotides 738 -1688 in the SEQ ID NO:1 before it has been deprived of its functionality as a *thyA* gene and wherein approximately 200 base pairs of said structural *thyA* gene is deleted followed by an insert of a non-coding region of DNA.

25(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 18, wherein the strain has its structural *thyA* gene removed from the *thyA* gene of the chromosome.

26(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the strain has its structural *thyA* gene removed from the *thyA* gene of the chromosome and wherein the at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA element has a foreign *thyA* gene.

27(previously presented). The  $\Delta$  *thyA* strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 26 wherein the foreign *thyA* gene is an *E. coli thyA* gene.

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28(previously presented). The  $\Delta thyA$  strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 27, wherein the encoded heterologous protein is heat labile enterotoxin B-subunit of *Escherichia coli* (LTB).

29(previously presented). The  $\Delta thyA$  strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 27, wherein the encoded heterologous protein is *Schistosoma japonicum* glutathione S-transferase 26 kD protein (GST 26 kD).